

UNIVERSITY SENATE
UNIVERSITY AT ALBANY
STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

RESOLUTION ON STUDENT REPRESENTATION IN GOVERNANCE

Introduced by: Governance Council

Date: September 26, 2016

Whereas, the GSA and SA leadership only become aware of advisory groups outside of governance through the Senate and do not have regular and direct access to administration; and

Whereas, the selection of student representatives by the administration for service on advisory groups outside of governance is inconsistent; and

Whereas, administration does not always inform student governments when a student is selected to serve on advisory groups outside of governance; and

Whereas, student participation on advisory groups outside of governance is critical for gaining feedback from a student perspective; and

Whereas, communication between student representatives on advisory groups outside of governance and student government representatives is critical for the continued growth of student success and engagement; and

Whereas, the students selected by administration without informing the student government may be underprepared to serve on committees without the structure of student government to provide resources, institutional knowledge, and support; and

Whereas, the student government has a right to be informed when a student is independently selected to represent student interests on a committee outside of governance;

Resolved, that the University Senate encourages the administration to utilize the Governance Council to consult with student governments for student representatives; and

Resolved, if there is reason to select student representatives independently, that these selections should be in addition to at least one representative from student government, and that the administration should report the name and contact information of those students to the student representatives on the Governance Council.

Resolved, that the Governance Council should consult with the student government representatives to write a section for the Senate Handbook on best practices for encouraging strong and fair student representation at the University at Albany.

Supplemental material:

Article 1, Section 2.65 of the Faculty Bylaws indicates that the Governance Council should be consulted when the administration constitutes advisory bodies which are outside of governance. The undergraduate and graduate student governments do not have formal consultation processes with administration outlined. Access to and knowledge of advisory bodies outside of governance has primarily occurred through student representation in the Senate. However, despite this access through the Senate, student representation on advisory groups outside of governance has been an inconsistent and problematic process. Students are not always offered seats on these groups, students are selected by administration without consulting student governments, student governments are sometimes not informed that a student has been selected, and even when an appropriate process is followed students have faced an a culture of exclusion.

Key examples from the Graduate Student Association:

Start-Up New York Committee – Graduate student was selected without consulting the GSA and we not informed of this student’s selection. When the request for faculty nominations came to the Governance Council it did not request a graduate student. The GSA suggested that if this is to be a standing committee that the GSA Vice President should be the standing member. This was when we found out a student had already been asked. When we asked for the GSA VP to serve instead, we were told that they did not want to ask this student to step down, which we contended was not a valid argument, and communications on the issue ceased.

Blue Ribbon Panel –

Problem #1: Names were requested from the GSA and 12 names were provided in order of preference. Top names were ignored. Some names were forwarded to the Governance Council and the GSA rep on GOV was consulted. Any communication from administration stopped at that point. The GSA independently checked in with these representatives only to find out that

only 1 or 2 students were on the council. The reason given was that a nominated student did not respond to the initial request. A period of 2 months passed and no other student representative was asked to serve, no one was GSA was contacted to provide an alternative. Instead, a seat was left open for the first of the Panel meetings. The GSA tracked down the originally GOV approved students and secured their commitment to serve and informed administration. Administration informed the GSA that they had chosen a different student which was not from the original list provided by the GSA. A graduate student protested this action at the President's Forum a few months later and administration claimed that it had chosen a "GSA rep" but that student's only connection to the GSA was brief service on COR a year before. They were not on the original list, involved in GSA advocacy on graduate student stipends, nor were they currently active in the GSA. When contacted by the GSA to discuss the topic of the panel, the student admitted they had little understanding of the issues to be discussed.

Problem #2:

The student who was approved by the governance process and was included from the beginning on the Blue Ribbon Panel ultimately had to resign the position because too many of the meetings were re-scheduled after she had taken time off from work losing wages for those days. She was not able to accommodate the flexibility that was demanded of her and she was forced to resign midway interrupting student representation on this panel.

Applied Learning Steering Committee:

When asked if they had student representation on the Applied Learning Steering Committee it was indicated that an undergraduate soon to be graduate student has been selected.

The Senate Handbook should indicate that being almost a graduate student does not translate to appropriate graduate student representation. Nor would the reverse be appropriate. Even if a graduate student was once an undergraduate their representation on a committee should not be considered to constitute a replacement of undergraduate representation.

Sexual Assault Steering Committee:

No request was made for graduate student representatives last summer. The Just Ask campaign was formulated without graduate student input and the GSA was informed of the existence of this committee through the University Council once the committee had already finished its work.